



**Representative  
Joe McDermott**

**Committee assignments:**

- Appropriations
- Education
- State Government Operations and Accountability

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# 2005 Session Wrap Up

## 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

June 2005

*Dear Neighbors:*

*This year we wrapped-up the 2005 Legislative Session on time – under a bright sun and with several hours to spare before the midnight, April 24 deadline!*

*We write the state budget every two years, as you know, and it's always a difficult task that involves many hours of hard work. I saw this closer than ever as a member of the House Appropriations Committee for the first time this year. But it pays off. I'm pleased with the budget we passed. We preserved critical programs and services despite the huge deficit we started out with in January, and also managed to make intelligent investments in our priority areas.*

*Education, health care and the economy are the issues that matter most because they affect you directly. Keeping that in mind throughout the entire session, I focused on real-world legislation.*

*I'm proud to share this legislative report with you. Feel free to contact me with your comments and ideas. I'm here to serve you. Please keep in touch.*

*Sincerely,*

Joe McDermott  
State Representative  
34th Legislative District



# Rep. Joe McDermott • 34<sup>th</sup> District

## EDUCATION

The results we produced this session reflect House Democrats' commitment to Washington's kids.

### **Initiative 732**

The new operating budget fully funds voter-approved Initiative 732, providing teacher cost-of-living-allowances (COLAs). In the first year of the biennium teachers and school employees will receive a 1.2 percent increase, and then 1.7 percent in the second year. This funding comes from the General Fund which, in part, is funded by increases in liquor taxes.

### **Initiative 728**

The budget also funds Initiative 728, lowering class-sizes. The \$138 million needed for smaller class sizes are obtained from the Estate Tax and increased cigarette taxes.

### **LAP**

The Legislature also passed my Learning Assistance Program bill, which improves its funding formula, changing the allocation of the money from being based on test scores to poverty. The budget also increases the LAP program by \$25 million.



### **Special Education**

Recognizing existing and growing needs, the budget we adopted invests \$29 million more in special education over the next two years.

### **School Construction**

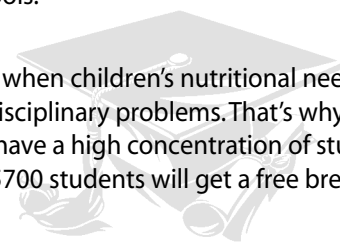
The Capital Budget allocates \$619 million for much-needed school construction. This is a record-breaking level of investment in local schools.

### **School Breakfasts**

Of course breakfast is the most important meal of the day because when children's nutritional needs are met, they're more attentive in class, have better attendance and fewer disciplinary problems. That's why we passed my bill requiring school districts that provide lunch programs and have a high concentration of students in poverty to also provide breakfast. This bill ensures that more than 5700 students will get a free breakfast every school day.

### **School Governance**

Another good piece of legislation passed this year is a reform of state-level governance of the K-12 system which abolishes the A+ Commission, and gives its responsibilities to a newly reconstituted State Board of Education. This will result in unifying policy-making on graduation requirements, academic standards, and school accountability in a single body. The bill also gives the Professional Educator Standards Board full authority to set rules and requirements for educator-preparation programs and educator certification.



## HEALTH CARE

This session House Democrats led by Representative Eileen Cody, who chairs the House Health Care Committee, reached important successes in the health care arena. Some of them include:

- Bulk buying (Prescription Drug Purchasing Consortium)
- Importing Canadian drugs
- Drugs discount programs
- Mental Health Parity
- Health Insurance for all kids by 2011
- Basic Health Plan



## SMOKING BAN

This year I once again introduced a bill to ban smoking in all indoor public places including bars, restaurants, and taverns. We protect employees in some workplaces; I believe we should protect all employees equally from the dangers of second hand smoke. While the bill was approved by the House Health Care Committee, it failed to receive a vote in the House and did not become law.

Frustrated with the legislative process, advocate organizations are now gathering signatures for Initiative 901 to get it on the November ballot. The Initiative would not only ban smoking in all indoor public places, but allow local jurisdictions to take further measures to protect public health from secondhand smoke.

# 2005 Session Wrap Up

## JOBS

This session we passed legislation that invests in our businesses, our infrastructure, and most important, our people:

**Job Development Fund:** provides grants to cities, towns and other government entities for projects that create local jobs, stimulate economic development, and promote community growth.

**Unemployment Insurance:** we reformed the state Unemployment Insurance program to return to averaging earnings over 2 quarters rather than 4, making benefit payments to seasonal workers, such as construction and farm workers, more in keeping with their earnings when working.

**Apprenticeships:** public projects estimated to cost \$1 million or more must employ apprentices for at least 15 percent of the total labor hours.



## ENVIRONMENT

### **Oil-spill oversight council**

The Dalco Passage Oil Spill last October between Tacoma and Vashon and Maury Islands, as well as two minor spills in the same area over the winter, demonstrates how damaged our waters, wildlife, beaches and quality of life can be in mere moments.

This session we established an oversight council, which includes private citizens, to review environmental safety issues, minimize the risk of oil spills, enhance oil-spill prevention and ensure a rapid response. The council will monitor oil terminal and tanker operations and review the adequacy of oil-spill contingency plans in our marine waters. Further, we provided \$1.6 million in funding for key recommendations of the Early Action Task Force to prevent future spills and improve response when accidents do occur.

### **Green buildings**

This session Washington State became the first state in the nation to require smart energy standards for **all** of its schools and public buildings. Energy-efficient buildings save money on lower utility bills and promote better health. The Legislature approved Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for new university, prison, school and government high-performance buildings.



### **Clean cars**

We also passed legislation to reduce car emissions, which will protect our families from harmful pollutants, as well as fight global climate change and reduce our dependence on imported oil.

Our state adopted stricter car emissions standards, known as "California standards," which eight other states currently use. The new standards take effect in 2009.

## TRANSPORTATION

As more people make Washington State their home, the need to reinforce our infrastructure only grows bigger. Bridges and highways across our state are at risk of failure. Repairing them is not a question of *if*, and the *when* is **now**. Continuing to put off these improvements is endangering lives and slowing our economy. This session we passed legislation to get people moving safely and efficiently.

The revenue package we passed this year raises \$8.5 billion for new investments, including \$2 billion for the Alaskan Way viaduct and \$500 million for the State Route 520 floating bridge.



In addition, we're investing over \$157 million in the 34<sup>th</sup> district, here are some of the highlights:

- \$ 49: Ferry terminal preservation at Fauntleroy, Tahlequah, and Vashon
- \$ 72: Ferry vessel preservations
- \$ 1: SR 99/1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S bridge – painting
- \$ 2: Duwamish Intelligent Transportation System
- \$ 7: East Marginal Way ramp
- \$ 8: Lander Street overcrossing
- \$ 2: Duwamish Truck Mobility improvement project
- \$ 12: Passenger Only Capital



# Rep. Joe McDermott • 34<sup>th</sup> District

## CIVIL RIGHTS

With many successes this year, one failure stands out. As you know, state law already protects people from discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, sex, marital status or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical handicap. But we need to expand this list if we're serious about making Washington a prejudice-free state.

Every year, for almost three decades, progressive legislators introduced legislation to ban all forms of discrimination in Washington. It's known as the Anti-Discrimination Bill and its purpose is to make it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on their sexual orientation. It would ban any discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, credit, insurance and commercial transactions.

The bill has passed the house four times since 1994, but was always killed in the Senate. This session it finally made it to the Senate floor and was a mere one vote short.

We'll bring it back next year and as many years as necessary until every single Washington resident is protected equally under the law. This legislation is about fairness, justice and equality, strong values that our district holds and I will continue to fight for.

## ELECTIONS

The November 2004 General Election raised questions as to the efficiency and accuracy of our system; this session we passed a package of election reform bills that will make significant improvements to our electoral process.

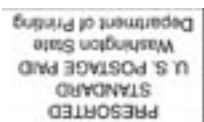
**Mail ballots:** Helps counties in the state to convert to all vote-by-mail elections. Currently five Washington counties vote entirely by mail and 69% of the state votes by permanent absentee ballot.

**Provisional Ballots:** Requires that provisional ballots look different than regular ballots, ensuring that they are not accidentally combined with regular ballots at polling sites. Regulates the handling and security of provisional ballots and requires auditors to notify a voter within three days if the signature does not match.

**Signature verification:** Creates a new set of guidelines on how to verify a voter's signature. When voting at the poll you'll need identification before signing the book. If a person cannot provide identification as required by this section, he or she will be issued a provisional ballot.

**State-wide Voter Database:** Requires the Secretary of State to quarterly review, update and correct the voter registration list.

**Military voters:** Return envelope for mail ballots must have a box the voter can check to indicate a member of the armed forces or an overseas voter.



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